CHAPTER 8

The Chinese Senior Population's Living Arrangements, Health, and Nursing Care Analysis of Data from the Sixth Population Census

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Abstract

By analyzing data from the sixth population census conducted in 2010, we discovered the following. 1) The proportion of households containing persons over the age of 65 was higher in villages than in towns, and higher in towns than in cities. 2) Among the senior population, empty nest households grew nearly nine percent from 2000 to 2010. With the floating population has become the status quo, the proportion of empty nest households is increasing rapidly as the population grows ever older. 3) As the population ages, the health of seniors is dramatically decreasing, and the health of females is worse than that of men in every age group. 4) The health of seniors with spouses is better than that of seniors without spouses. 5) When they are unable to handle living alone, seniors primarily rely upon family members to sustain them. Female seniors rely on family members for life needs more than male seniors. The effects of pension insurance must be strengthened.

Keywords

family living arrangements – health status – old-age support

Much previous research demonstrates that the family living arrangements and health status of seniors directly influence their senior care needs and their reliance upon external care resources. At the same time, however, care arrangements and the level of health of seniors exert a marked influence on their children's employment opportunities and number of hours of their children can work. The significance of this influence is that the reliance of seniors on

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their family for care resources directly restricts the employment options and work arrangements of their children.\textsuperscript{9} For these reasons, the living arrangements, health, and senior care reliance of seniors will affect China's future implementation of institutions for elderly care. In this chapter, we analyze the family living arrangements, the bodily health status, and the senior care reliance situation of seniors using data from sixth decennial population census.

1 The Family Living Arrangements of Chinese Seniors

In traditional Chinese society, life expectancy was extremely short. Around 1950, the average life expectancy for a child of zero years was only 35.\textsuperscript{10} Thus most seniors were not expected to live to 65, hence the popular expression that living to the ancient age of 70 was a rare accomplishment. As society has stabilized and the economy developed, Chinese average life expectancy has rapidly increased, up to 73.1 in 2009.\textsuperscript{11} As life expectancies for infants of age zero have increased, the life expectancies of other age groups have also grown. The results of the sixth population census in 2010 indicate that the proportion of seniors 60-years and older to the total population was 13.26 percent, and the proportion of seniors 65-years and older to the total population was 8.87 percent, making China’s aging population problems relatively mild compared to the rest of the world. However, China is still the world's most populous nation, meaning that China is the nation with the most seniors 65-years and older, about 123 million in total. Increases to the senior population have on the one hand caused increases to the proportion of households containing seniors, and on the other hand caused an increase to the number of seniors living in empty nest households.

\textsuperscript{9} Jiang Cheng and Zhao Xiaojun 蒋承、赵晓军, “Zhongguo laonian zhaoliao de jihui yu chengben yanjiu 中国老年照料的机会与成本研究 [Research on the Opportunities and Costs of Old Age Care in China],” \textit{Guanli Shijie} 管理世界 10 (2009).
